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ADDRESS



ON

CHURCH MUSIC:

DELIVERED BY REQUEST,

ON THE EVENING OF SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1826,

IN THE VESTRY OF HANOVER CHURCH,

AND ON THE EVENING OF MONDAY FOLLOWING,

IN THE THIRD BAPTIST CHURCH,

BOSTON.

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BY LOWELL MASON.

REVISED EDITION.



Boston:

HILLIARD, GRAY, LITTLE, AND WILKINS.

T. R. MARVIN, PRINTER.

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1827.

DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS.....TO WIT :

District Clerk's Office.

BE it remembered, that on the eighth day of May, A. D. 1827, in the fifty first Year of the Independence of the United States of America, THEOPHILUS R. MARVIN, of the said District, has deposited in this Office the Title of a Book, the Right whereof he claims as Proprietor, in the Words following, *to wit* :

Address on Church Music : delivered by request, on the evening of Saturday, October 7, 1826, in the Vestry of Hanover Church, and on the evening of Monday following, in the Third Baptist Church, Boston. By Lowell Mason.

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled " An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned ;" and also to an Act entitled " An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned ; and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints."

JNO. W. DAVIS, *Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.*

To Lowell Mason, Esq.

SIR,—Having heard the Address which you delivered in the Vestry of Hanover Church and in the Baptist Meeting House in Charles-street, on Church Music, and believing it adapted to awaken interest and promote correct views, with respect to that important subject, we respectfully solicit a copy for publication; and in doing this, we are confident we speak the language of those who were present.

LYMAN BEECHER,
DANIEL SHARP,
B. B. WISNER,
JEREMIAH EVARTS,
WILLIAM ROPES.

BOSTON, OCT. 10, 1826.

BOSTON, OCTOBER 11, 1826.

GENTLEMEN,—The Address on Church Music, delivered in the Vestry of Hanover Church, in this city, on Saturday evening, 7th inst. and in the Third Baptist Church on the Monday evening following, was prepared on very short notice and amidst numerous engagements. Being about to leave the city, it is impossible for me to give it a thorough revision. The hope, however, that imperfect as it is, it may have some tendency to call the attention of Christians to a much neglected but pleasing and important part of public worship, induces me to yield to your request of a copy for publication.

Very respectfully,

L. MASON.

ADDRESS.

CHURCH MUSIC is a divine institution. The numerous examples in the old testament, together with the hymn at the institution of the sacramental supper ; the singing of Paul and Silas in prison, as well as direct precepts and exhortations in various parts of scripture, are sufficient to place the truth of this position beyond the possibility of a rational doubt. Accordingly, we find that music has been employed in the worship of God, in all ages of the church.

The object or design of its institution is no less obvious. “Moses and the children of Israel sang this song *unto the Lord.*”—“O come let us sing *unto the Lord.*”—“It is good to sing praises *unto our God.*”—“At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises *unto God.*” To animate and enliven the feelings of devotion is undoubtedly the office of music in the church.

Through the medium of music, truth is presented to the heart in the most forcible manner ; the feelings are aroused—the affections elevated. “*It was*

for the raising up of men's hearts, and the sweetening of their affections towards God," says Hooker, "that the prophet David, having had singular knowledge, not in poetry alone, but in *music* also, judged *them both* to be things most necessary for the house of God ; and left behind him to that purpose a number of divinely indited poems ; and was further the author of adding unto poetry, *melody in public prayer*, in which considerations, the church of Christ doth likewise, at the present day, retain it as an ornament to God's service, and an *help to our own devotion.*"*

It is as a religious exercise only, that we are authorized to introduce music into the church, and from religious motives should Christians be induced to cultivate an acquaintance with it. That there is no religion in music, is readily admitted : but music is capable of subserving a religious purpose : were it not so, it would never have been introduced into the church by divine appointment. There is no religion in eloquence : but who does not acknowledge its importance to the minister of the Gospel ? Who has not felt the words of divine truth sink deep into his heart, when they have been accompanied with the thrilling and irresistible tones of an earnest and commanding elocution ? Music has a similar power : it can move, or melt, or rouse, an audience ; and ought, therefore, to be made a powerful auxiliary to the faithful preacher.† Music is a refined species

* Eccl. Polity, Book V. Sec. 33.

† The effect of music upon St. Augustin, he thus describes :—"How abundantly did I weep before God, to hear those hymns of thine ; being touched to the very quick, by the voices of thy sweet church song. The voices flowed into my ears, and

of elocution ; and, as such, its office is to enforce upon the heart the sentiment which is sung.* It ought to do this more effectively than the simple *reading* of the same words could do, although they were to be read in the best manner possible ; for otherwise it would be useless. It were better that music should not be introduced at all into public worship, if it fail to accomplish this end. Indeed its influence in the church cannot be of a merely negative character. Musical taste is much more intimately connected with religious feeling than is generally supposed. It cherishes on the one hand, or destroys on the other, those pious emotions which public and social worship is designed to call into exercise.

Singing the praises of God is a part of the public services of religion, which, when properly conducted, makes its appeal directly to the *heart*, and is at once solemn and delightful : but when badly conducted, it becomes rather a hindrance than a help to

thy truth pleasingly instilled into my heart ; which caused the affections of my devotion to overflow, and my tears to run over ; and happy did I find myself therein."—*Confessions, Lib. IX. Cap. 6.*

Edwards, in describing the blessed effects of the revival of religion at Northampton, in 1735, speaks thus of singing :—" Our public praises were then greatly enlivened ; God was then served in our psalmody, in some measure, in the beauty of holiness. It has been observable, that there has been scarce any part of divine worship, wherein good men amongst us have had grace so drawn forth, and their hearts so lifted up in the ways of God, as in singing his praises : our congregation excelled all that ever I knew, in the external part of the duty, before ; the men generally carrying regularly, and well, three parts of music, and the women a part by themselves : but now they were evidently wont to sing with unusual elevation of heart and voice, which made the duty pleasant indeed."—*Narrative of Surprising Conversions.*

* This was well understood by the ancients, especially the Grecians ; and is it not probable, that a high tone of oratorical elocution in their performances gave to their music that astonishing influence upon the passions, of which we read in history ?

devotion, and often prevents, in a great degree, the good effects which might otherwise result from the services of the Sabbath.

Now if we merely glance at church music, as it exists and is conducted in many churches at the present day, we cannot fail to be convinced, that it falls far short of producing its legitimate effects. "Of all our religious solemnities," says Dr. Watts, "psalmody is the most unhappily managed. The very action, which should elevate us to the most delightful and divine sensations, doth not only flatten our devotions, but too often touches all the springs of uneasiness within us." This remark is strictly applicable to much of the church music of our country at the present day. The manner in which this duty is frequently performed, is not only calculated to excite disgust in the man of musical taste and feeling, but to "flatten the devotions" of the Christian; to withdraw the attention from the subject of the words; to irritate the feelings, and thus to unfit the mind for the other exercises of the Sabbath; and perhaps it is not too much to say, that, *in general*, notwithstanding the improvement which has been made within a few years past, the improprieties still attending the singing in public worship, are so numerous, and so obvious, as to frustrate, in a great measure, the design of the institution.

The principal reason for the present degraded state of church music, seems to be, that its design

has been forgotten, and its cultivation as a religious exercise, neglected. It is a fact, that while music is regarded almost universally as a necessary appendage to public and social worship, its importance as a devotional exercise, is in a great measure overlooked. Hence it is often given up, almost exclusively, into the hands of those who have no other qualifications than mere musical talent; and who, being destitute of any feelings of piety, are almost as unfit to conduct the singing of the church, as they would be the preaching or the praying. Having been furnished by nature with an ear to appreciate the melody of sweet sounds, such persons take up church music as a mere amusement, and pursue it solely with reference to the tasteful gratification it affords them. In proportion, therefore, as they are enabled to delight themselves, and to draw forth the applause of others, by communicating the same feelings to them, in the same proportion they succeed in accomplishing the object of their exertions.

Not only do singers disregard the true object of church music, and pervert its use; but its design is also overlooked by a large proportion of those who compose our worshipping assemblies. Even Christians seem to be unmindful of its importance as an act of religious worship. Indeed, it is too commonly the case, that the music of the church, like that of the theatre, is employed only to give variety to the performances, and to relieve the mind from a too constant attention to the subject;

thus affording a kind of interlude to religious worship, or a little recreation from the tediousness of an hour's devotion ; or, perhaps, an opportunity for the minister to review his sermon, or for the people to look round upon one another.

Can any good be expected to arise from the institution under such circumstances ? Can church music thus conducted be regarded as an exercise of devotion, or be expected to excite or cherish religious feeling ? Certainly not. It has nothing to do with religion, unless, indeed, it be to interrupt the meditations of the pious, to dissipate the serious feelings of the awakened, and to lull into greater stupidity the thoughtless and secure, and thus to counteract the object of its introduction into the church. In vain, under such circumstances, shall we look to the singing for aid in our devotions. In vain will the minister expect, after having spent his whole strength in a faithful sermon, and labored earnestly and affectionately for the salvation of his people, through the precious season of the Sabbath, to deepen the impression as he closes the service of the day by singing a psalm or hymn. Rather will he have reason to fear for the effect of the closing exercise, and tremble lest that state of anxious feeling, which, under God, he has been enabled to call forth, and which excites his warmest hopes, will be in a great measure dissipated by an exhibition of musical talent, or a flourish of clarinets and bassoons, or flutes or viols, *or a brilliant display of execution on the organ* just as the con-

gregation are about to disperse. Banish singing from the church—consign our hymn books to the flames—and hang the harps of Zion upon the willows, rather than that *such* should be the effects of music.

Now if Christians had not lost sight of the real object of sacred music, is it possible to believe that the prevailing abuses of it would be tolerated? In what estimation would a congregation be supposed to hold the other exercises,—prayer, for example,—if, instead of listening with devout attention, and endeavouring to lift up their hearts unto God, they were to look upon it as a mere exhibition of elocution, or improve the opportunity to look around and see who is and who is not at church, or make it a signal for restlessness and noise? But how frequently is it the case, when the most profound silence and attention have prevailed during all the other parts of service—even while the minister is *reading* the psalm or hymn—that the *subject* of song is *forgotten*, the moment the *singing* commences, amidst the musical parade that attends it. The mind which was attentive during the reading of the words, is withdrawn from the subject, the moment in which *that* exercise commences, whose express design should be to deepen the impression already made by the words, and quicken emotions already kindled.* Surely in no part of public worship is the guilt of “drawing nigh to God with our mouth and honoring him with our lips, while our

* See Review of Handel and Haydn Coll. Church Music, in Chr. Advocate.

hearts are far from him," so frequently, so constantly incurred, as when we profess to sing the praises of God, and to "make melody *in our hearts* unto the Lord."

Such is a very brief and imperfect view of the nature and design of church music, and of its present degraded state. The remedy for this state of things cannot fail to suggest itself to every one who loves the public exercises of religion, and is desirous of deriving benefit from them.

The church must take up the subject: the influence of piety must be brought to bear upon it—the influence of that same spirit of the Gospel which is so manifest in the benevolent exertions of the present day. The proper object of church music must be understood; and Christians must cultivate it as a part of religious duty.* The fact of its being a divine institution, is sufficient to show its *importance*; and if God has himself introduced it into the church, Christians may not safely disregard it, or omit to perform their duty in relation to it.

But what is the duty of Christians on this subject? To this question we answer, that it is undoubtedly their duty to cultivate music so far as to be able to engage in singing as a part of religious worship with

* "If persons be now not capable, because they know not how to sing, that doth not excuse them, unless they have been incapable of learning. As it is the command of God, that all should sing, so all should make conscience of learning to sing, as it is a thing which cannot be decently performed at all without learning. Those, therefore, who neglect to learn to sing, *live in sin*, as they neglect what is necessary in order to their attending one of the ordinances of God's worship."

—Edward's *Sermon on Self-Examination*.

decency and propriety ; to the edification of themselves and others. And that which is the duty of Christians in relation to this subject, is the duty of all. Music is an art ; and is to be regularly cultivated, in its own measure, like painting, or poetry, or sculpture, or architecture. We cannot expect to derive benefit from it, if we suffer it to lie neglected. In the secular department this principle is well understood. The music of the field, of the drama, and of the chamber, is cultivated. Among the wealthy, every parlour must be furnished with a piano, and every family must have the services of a teacher : the sonata, the song, the march, the waltz, must be made familiar even in Christian families. It is only the music of the church, that is left to take care of itself, or committed to unskilful hands.

Now we do not complain that secular music is cultivated : on the contrary, we rejoice in its progress : for this, as well as the other fine arts, affords a rational and refined amusement ; it is the source of exquisite delight to the man of taste and cultivation ; and it undoubtedly contributes to the happiness and moral improvement of mankind. But we *do* complain that *sacred music should be so totally neglected* ; and this, too, by those who acknowledge its importance as a part of religious worship.

The minister thinks it important to cultivate the art of oratory, and to cultivate it for religious pur-

poses : and he spares neither time nor expense to become an accomplished speaker, for he knows the power of eloquence to move the heart and to enforce divine truth. It is equally important for those, who sing the praises of God, to improve themselves in their art, if they would awaken devotional feeling in the assembly of God's people. Music does not spring up spontaneously in the human mind, growing with its growth, and strengthening with its strength. It bears more resemblance to the exotic, which requires a delicate and attentive cultivation ; and until music be cultivated for religious purposes, and with feelings arising from a sense of religious duty, the songs of Zion will continue to be languid and ineffectual.

The necessity of cultivation may be made apparent by a mere glance at some of those qualities which are essential to vocal music. Among these are tone, accent, emphasis, and intonation.

The importance of a good tone of voice in the singer is universally acknowledged ; as we often hear it said, such a person has a fine voice, a delightful tone, &c. This, it is supposed by many, is altogether a natural gift ; but such is not the fact. The organs of some are, undoubtedly, much more favorably constructed for the production of pleasing sounds than those of others ; but the very best natural voice may be vastly improved by cultivation ; and there are few persons so destitute of natural qualifications, as to be unable to sing agreeably by perseverance in a judicious course of practice.

The necessity of the cultivation of tone in elocution is universally admitted. But what is singing if not the very soul of eloquence itself? If an agreeable tone of voice is desirable in that species of delivery which is principally didactic, and addressed to the understanding, how much more important is it in that which makes its appeal directly to the heart! The importance of articulation, accent, emphasis, &c. to the orator, are universally admitted. It cannot be necessary to show that they are equally important to the singer. Correct intonation, or an ability to sing exactly in tune, is a quality of very great importance to the singer, and is moreover a thing not easily acquired: it is not to be attained but by much practice. The gift of a musical ear, upon which intonation is principally dependent, has been, in some instances, to a considerable degree, withheld from our species. There are very many who are unable to appreciate musical sounds, or sing, with any tolerable degree of accuracy, the natural scale of music, till after having bestowed considerable attention to the art. And, as it is with the voice, so it is with the ear: its very best natural condition is imperfect, and needs cultivation. An *ability to learn*, and a general fondness for musical sounds, which may be improved, seem to be the talents bestowed in this case. Nature has perhaps done the same for the musician as for the orator;—has given him a natural capacity which, by industry, and perseverance, may be improved and brought to a great degree of perfection. But music is abso-

lutely dependent upon correct intonation. Without it singing is intolerable ; and instead of the ‘ concord of sweet sounds’

“ Awaken’d discord, shrieks, and scolds, and raves,
Wild as the dissonance of winds and waves.”

“ Where, when our ears are thus assailed, shall we find that *sentimental* appeal to the heart, which constitutes the chief excellence of music, and is the principal object contemplated in its employment in the church ?” No superiority in any other requisite of vocal art can supply a deficiency in correct intonation ; and this can only be acquired by that well directed exercise, or cultivation of the vocal powers, which, while it strengthens and enlarges the compass of the voice, renders its obedience to the laws of science exact and undeviating by the acknowledged force of habit.

But, it will be asked, what means are Christians to employ for the improvement of church music ? and how shall their efforts be directed so as to produce the desired result ? Shall the whole congregation be encouraged to join promiscuously, in this exercise ?—or shall it be committed to a select choir ?* If the devotional effect of music depends

* The music of the primitive church was performed in different methods. Sometimes a single performer sung in solo ; sometimes the whole congregation united in full chorus, sometimes the congregation was divided into separate choirs, which sung in alternate succession ; and sometimes a single person commenced a verse in solo, and the full choir closed it in chorus.—See *Bingham’s Antiq. Book 14. Ch. 1. Also Sir John Hawkins’s His. Mus. Vol. 1. p. 289.* The art, however, was then but little understood by Christians ; and in those days of persecution and trial, they had little leisure for cultivation. They worshipped Jehovah as they had opportunity in the same strains of melody which they had been accustomed to use in the worship of

upon the mere circumstance of a person's engaging audibly in singing; or, if it depend upon the quantity of noise produced; then, undoubtedly, the congregational mode is to be preferred. But if, as has been suggested, there is a strong analogy between the art of oratory and that of music, if the effects of each are to be produced by means which are somewhat similar; then all will agree, that, from such a jargon of sound as will be produced by a large assembly of all ages and descriptions, engaged each one in singing as seems good in his own eyes, but little benefit can be expected. Wherever congregational singing has prevailed, there has been neither good tone, correct intonation, distinct articulation, nor proper emphasis or expression. All has been jargon and tumult.

Surely this mode of singing must appear very defective, if we consider the means by which music operates upon the mind, or the qualifications which are indispensable to the success of the singer. If it be said that it is the duty of every man to sing the praises of God, and make melody in his heart unto the Lord—it is granted: so, also, it is the duty of every man to pray, and by supplication make known his wants unto God; and it is no more obligatory upon him to *sing aloud* in public worship, in the

gods of wood or stone, previous to their conversion. They did this as a matter of necessity. They were mostly ignorant men, except as they were taught by the Spirit. They were not professed minstrels or composers; nor had they any models of Christian psalmody for imitation. Still, they did "what they could" in such circumstances; and as the public ear had not then become fastidious through the extensive cultivation of secular music, it was easy for them to secure to themselves the legitimate influences of music. We are placed in circumstances totally different. Will it hereafter be said of us that *we* have done what *we* could?

one case, than it is to *pray aloud* in the other, unless he can do it to general edification: but, in both cases, he *is* required to worship God in *spirit* and in *truth*. Besides, a man may sing so as seriously to disturb the devotions of others. Such cases are not rare in congregational singing; and certainly we should regard the edification and comfort of others so much as to be willing for their sake, if necessary, to prosecute our own devotions in a silent manner.*

It is sometimes said that there is a peculiar solemnity in the circumstance that the whole assembly are engaged, at the same time, in singing the praises of God. "But our feelings of solemnity, as far as externals are concerned, may be, and often are, the result of mere custom or habit; and surely when they lead us to adopt a course of management that has a tendency to destroy the practical utility of an important divine institution, they should be impartially examined before they are allowed to govern our decisions."† May not the whole assembly engage spiritually, in the singing, while none but the choir perform audibly, as easily as they may engage spiritually in prayer, while no voice but that of the preacher is heard?

There is indeed this difference in the design of the two exercises—the one necessarily employs but

* Let every one who is accustomed to sing "below" in those congregations where singing is conducted by a choir, ask himself whether his performances, although they may be edifying to himself, are not unpleasant to those who sit near him, and whether he may not be the means of hindering their devotion? The result of such inquiries would often be mortifying.

† See Hastings's Dissertation on Musical Taste, in which work several of the leading thoughts contained in this address are ably illustrated.

a single voice, while the other, for the most part, requires a union of many voices in simultaneous enunciation. Still there must be harmony, or we shall have jargon instead of music. There must be articulation, accent, and emphasis, as well as harmony ; for “ unless these give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped ? ” Those, therefore, who are destitute of the necessary qualifications, ought not to insist on their imagined privilege. If this would be too great a piece of self-denial, then let them cultivate their talents that the Lord “ may receive his own with usury.” Let them not continue to offer that “ which has cost them nothing,” or which is “ lame, or blind, or torn.”

It is evident, then, that the congregational mode of singing, at least in the present state of musical cultivation, is defective ; and that, wherever it prevails, the object of the institution cannot be fully realized. On the other hand, a well trained choir have every facility for producing the proper effect—the *rhetorical effect* of church music. All the qualifications necessary such a choir may be supposed to possess ; and like the accomplished orator, they may bring their art to bear with all its force upon the sensibilities of their audience.

The objections which are made to this mode of conducting the music of public worship, will be found to apply to the *character of the choirs* with which our churches are furnished, to which allusion has already been made ;—to the *abuse of choirs* and

not to this special mode of singing. It is readily admitted that congregational singing may be a less evil than choirs, as the latter are frequently conducted; and it is not surprising that it should be preferred to such choirs, by those who have experienced their injurious effects. But let choirs be formed of serious and influential men; let Christians esteem it *their duty* to qualify themselves to take the lead in singing; and the objections to choirs will vanish. Church music will then rise to that station it ought to occupy, and become an handmaid instead of a scourge to devotion. And, indeed, were music generally cultivated by Christians, the question whether singing should be performed by choirs, or by the congregation at large, would hardly need discussion. For in this case all, or nearly all, would be able to join and sing with propriety and effect. Even in this case, however, a choir would still be important to lead and aid the singing of the congregation.

It is necessary, then, that in every church there should be a choir of cultivated singers. How shall these choirs be formed? Shall the church take the lead in this thing? or shall they, as they heretofore have done, give it up entirely into the hands of others, fold up their arms, and then sit down and lament over its low and degraded state, and wonder what is the matter.

But there are many objections against joining a choir of singers. The greatest probably is, that it is

not fashionable : it is considered by many as rather too humble an office for their station in life. But can any thing be considered degrading by the Christian, which has a tendency to promote the cause of piety in his own heart and in the hearts of others ? Dr. Watts has justly said, that singing the praises of God is more akin to the worship of the heavenly world, than any other employment on earth ; and shall Christians fear to degrade or lower themselves by engaging in such an employment as this ? Such a spirit does not become the Christian. Such a spirit had not the royal psalmist. Such a spirit will never afford consolation on the bed of death ; and if we should ever be admitted into heaven with such a spirit, we should be mere spectators there. For in heaven

“ Their golden harps *they* take,
 Harps ever tuned,
 and with preamble sweet
 Of charming symphony, they introduce
 Their sacred song, and waken raptures high :
 No voice exempt, no voice but well can join
 Melodious part ; such ” spirit “ is in heaven.”

Want of time is often urged as an excuse : an attention to singing would interfere with other engagements. But one duty can never interfere with another ; and if God has appointed singing in the church, then it is unquestionably the duty of Christians to devote so much time to it, as is necessary to sing with decency and propriety : I will not say that it is the duty of every Christian ; but where a talent has been given it should be improved. A

family is sometimes urged as an objection to uniting with a choir : the man has married a wife and cannot come ; he must now relinquish his post to some younger person ; he desires to sit with his family, and thinks his presence is needed there. But the singing must be carried on ; and if what has now been said is correct, it ought to be carried on by a choir ; by a choir very different from those, which, in too many instances, have had the lead of music in the churches ; by a choir composed of serious, religious persons—of those whose character is respected, whose judgment is matured, and whose example will have an important influence on others. It is not, indeed, the duty of every such person in a congregation to become a member of the choir ; for all are not needed. But it is the duty of some ; and circumstances must determine who these are. In general, it may be observed, that, where God has given a good natural capacity for music, the duty is plain ; and a good natural capacity for music is much more common than is generally supposed. Let the question be asked then, “ Do I possess a capacity to be useful in this department ; and am I needed there ? is my voice, or is my influence, or my example, needed there ? ” And if we can be of more service to the church in the choir than in the pew, let the sacrifice be made : let it be made on the same principle that it is done by the minister ; for he leaves his family, although his presence may be as important to them, as in the other case. The church calls for his services elsewhere, and he obeys the call.

It will not do to say that we can be of as much service, and sing as well in the pew as when with the choir. This is not the fact. Those who sing, must sing together ; they must sit together, at least until music is more generally understood, or there can be neither time, nor tune, nor force, nor expression. The rhetoric of music can in no other way be brought to bear upon the heart.

It is often said "I should willingly join the choir, but I have no musical talent." This is indeed a good excuse, if the assertion is strictly true : but probably it is not true, in one case out of a hundred. A capacity for music is much more common than is generally supposed. If no more attention was bestowed upon the art of reading than is bestowed upon the art of music, good readers would be as scarce as good singers are. Nature, it is believed, does generally bestow the capacity. True, it is more vivid in some than in others ; but if it lie totally neglected in any, it may in time become extinct. Probably there is not a congregation in this city but possesses the materials for a good choir. They may be deficient, indeed, in taste ; but almost every other qualification could be easily found. If it be said that high culture is important ; it is not denied that it is so ; but it is perhaps not more important than it is to eloquence in the preacher. A man can speak, and speak to the purpose, although ignorant of the graces of oratory ; and a man may easily be brought to sing, to his own edification, and to the edification of others, although ignorant of

many of the refinements in music. A choir formed from materials *now existing* in the church, might readily be brought to resemble the minister, who, with a good knowledge of the word of God, good common sense, sound judgment, and a heart warm with love to God and the souls of men, is yet, in a great degree, destitute of oratorical powers. But who would not prefer the preaching of even such a man to the eloquence of a Demosthenes or a Chatham, unaccompanied by more important qualifications; and who would not prefer a choir, made up of devout persons, capable of singing in a decent, sober, and impassioned, manner to the choicest Italian band from the theatre, or even to many of the undisciplined choirs which now take the lead in our churches?

If it be asked why all should cultivate music, since so small a proportion are needed for the choir; it may be answered, that, although the singing should be conducted by a choir, it is not intended that it should be, at all times, exclusively confined to them: on the contrary, it may be desirable that others, sitting below, should join, provided they are qualified to do this with propriety and effect.* Some degree of cultivation is also necessary to enable us to enter into the spirit of singing, and to derive benefit to ourselves from the performances of others. It is so in every fine art. Besides, singing is made a part of private and social worship.

* Devotional effect undoubtedly may be sometimes promoted, as in a psalm or hymn of exalted praise to God, by the full chorus of a *well instructed* congregation.

The family, the vestry, the conference, the prayer meeting, the sabbath school, and the monthly concert, all derive additional interest from a hymn of praise. The nature and design of these meetings require that they be conducted in a different manner from the public services of the sabbath. They should be more easy, social, and familiar: and as the formality of a *regular sermon* is dispensed with on such occasions, and a more familiar style of address adopted, both in preaching and in praying, so also it should be in singing. That the services of *all* are not absolutely needed, therefore, is no reason why *all* should not cultivate sacred music, so far as to be able to take a part in this exercise whenever their services *are* needed; and so far as to be able properly to appreciate the performances of others, and to derive benefit from them.

Every member of a congregation, and especially every member of a church, ought to feel an interest in the singing, as well as in the other public exercises of religion. But how often do we hear it said by Christians, "Oh! I can't sing—I have nothing to do with the singing." "You must take care of that!" Now here is the very root of the evil—the very bane of church music. A Christian nothing to do with singing! And yet anticipate that heaven where they cease not day nor night to chant the praises of the Redeemer! What would be thought of the Christian who should say the same of public prayer? If singing be a devotional exercise—as much so as prayer; then every Christian is, or ought to be, deeply inter-

ested in it ; and every Christian has duties to perform in relation to it. The only excuse that Christians who wholly neglect to cultivate church music, can give for their neglect, is that of the servant to whom was committed one talent : “ I went and hid thy talent in the earth.”

Enough has probably been said to show of what persons a choir of singers should be composed. It *is not* said, it will be observed, that a man possessing other qualifications, is to be excluded from singing, on the ground that he is not a pious man. On the contrary, the services of such a man may be important. Persons of this description should be invited and urged to sing : it is their duty to sing, to pray, to repent, to believe ; and to do all these things in the spirit which the Gospel requires ; and they are inexcusable if they neglect them. Besides, what can be more pleasing than to see the young, especially, meet together, and from proper motives, and with proper feelings, engage in this exercise ? But it *is* said that singing, so far as it relates to public worship, should be in the hands of the church, and that in every choir there should be a prevailing influence of piety. This should ever be deemed indispensable.*

Every choir thus formed, should have a competent

* The reasons for this are manifest. The unsanctified heart has no pious sympathies in common with the sanctified. While the one melts in the language of penitence, the other remains obdurate. While the one rejoices in a sweet sense of pardoning mercy, the other stands forth unhumbled and unmoved. While the one puts forth the full overflowings of grateful praise, the other holds forth perhaps a boldness of expression which seems to say, “ Who is the Almighty that we should fear him ?”

leader—if possible, a pious man ; at least a man of intelligence, taste, judgment, and influence ; one who is well acquainted with the whole subject of church music, and who is capable of instructing others. He should study Watts, if Watts be the book used, and indeed the whole range of lyric verse and musical expression, as regularly as a player studies Shakspeare, or the histrionic art. His soul should swell with the sentiment of the poet ; and that reading and that style of performance should be adopted, which are best calculated to enforce it upon the hearts of others. He should be as punctual in his attendance as the clergyman : and to him every member of the choir, should be in strict subjection. Such a laborer is worthy of his hire : and although, like the minister, he should be influenced by nobler motives, yet it is proper that he should receive a suitable compensation ; for much time and exertion he must necessarily devote to the duties of his office. The services of such a leader have not been properly appreciated or rewarded.

Let the choir meet occasionally for practice, perhaps as often as twice a week, until they have made considerable progress ; and choirs formed from materials now existing in the churches, may find it necessary to meet even more frequently than this, for a short time. But they should meet, not so much for the purpose of learning new tunes, as for the practice of such tunes as are already known, in connexion with psalms or hymns, and with reference to devotional effect ; keeping constantly in view the great

design of church music, the solemnity of public worship, and the responsibility of their station, as leading and greatly influencing the devotion of others. Nor is there any good reason why such meetings may not be profitable and pleasant; for if singing be cultivated as a devotional exercise, why may not singing meetings be as profitable as prayer meetings,* both to the choir and to the congregation. A choir should always feel that the devotions of the congregation, so far as *this exercise* is concerned, depend wholly upon them; and let them not forget what an important influence their performances may have upon the other exercises of public worship; that, under God, they have it in their power ordinarily to deepen impressions which divine truth may have made, or to scatter and dissipate those pious feelings, which the minister has been instrumental in exciting.

A thorough and permanent reformation in church music, however, cannot be effected, but by a gradual process. Children must be taught music, as they are taught to read.† Until something of this kind is done, it is in vain to expect any great and lasting improvement. Christian parents, especially, should feel it their duty to have their children instructed in such a manner, as that when they grow

* Why may they not sometimes be profitably united? Every person who feels in the *true spirit of singing*, would, at least, desire to invoke the divine blessing at all these special meetings for cultivation.

† "Not only should persons make conscience of learning to sing themselves, but parents should conscientiously see to it, that their children are taught this among other things, as their education and instruction belong to them."—*Edwards*.

up, and become pillars of the church in other respects, they may also be so in this. It is a mistake fatal to the interests of church music, to suppose that singing cannot be taught in childhood. In this respect, it is analogous to the art of reading. If *this* be not acquired until the age of eighteen or twenty years, it is probable it will always be neglected: so if music be not taught in childhood, much progress must not be expected afterwards.

As singing schools have heretofore, in many instances, been conducted, it may be doubted whether any benefit has been derived from them. A number of young persons who are desirous of spending their evenings together, with quite other objects in view than that of the religious cultivation of music, have recourse to a singing school. A teacher is employed, who is, perhaps, destitute of almost every important qualification; and who is about as fit to teach his pupils to pray or to preach, as to teach them to sing.* He supports neither order nor dignity in the school. A few indifferent tunes, perhaps, are, parrot-like, committed to memory, and executed without just time, correct intonation, or the least attention to the nature of the song, or the import of the words. The sentiment, indeed, is wholly disregarded; and the most solemn and affecting words are used as a matter of mere accommodation to the music, and are sung amidst unrestrained levity and

* There are indeed exceptions. Here and there we find a teacher qualified for his station; and in some instances in our country, piety and talent have been devoted to this subject. Wherever there is such a teacher, let him be encouraged; and let every church make exertions to obtain the services of such a man.

folly. After a few weeks practice of this kind, the pupils go into the church, not to assist in the worship of God, but to make an exhibition of their musical acquirements, and to draw forth the applause of the people. They introduce their new tunes, drive away from the choir those persons who have preceded them in a similar course of instruction and practice, and by their light and inappropriate performances, banish even the appearance of devotion from this exercise. To all this the church have submitted, and have called it the *cultivation of sacred music*.

The want of time to teach children music, cannot with propriety be offered as an excuse. A very small proportion of their time for two or three years, at the age of from ten to fifteen, would be sufficient ; and the practice of music might be pursued at this age in such a manner as to afford relief from other studies, and be a pleasant and agreeable employment. When the church shall take this subject into its own hands, when children shall be taught music, when choirs shall be composed of serious and proper persons who shall cultivate music as a religious duty, when singing shall be considered as much of a devotional exercise as prayer ; then the evils which have been so long existing, will speedily be removed, and church music will be performed in some measure as it ought to be. Christians on earth will imitate the redeemed in heaven, and the praises of God in the church below, will be a faint shadow of the triumphant strains which animate the heavenly choir.

The abuses of which we now complain, are wholly to be attributed to the apathy of the church on this subject. The difficulties and disputes that so frequently occur in choirs ; the gross violations of the sabbath which grow out of the existing state of things ; the whistling and talking and levity, so often observable in the singers' seats ; the thoughtless and profane manner in which the name of God is often used ; all the solemn mockery of singing as it now exists, is chargeable to the church. The guilt lies at her door, and the remedy is in her hands ; and yet, alas ! Christians and Christian ministers too, suffer this thing to go on, without lifting a finger to stay its progress, and without seeming to know or desiring to know what their duty is in relation to it, or whether they have any responsibility in the case whatever.

The subject of instrumental accompaniment is one of very great importance ; both because instruments are generally used, and because they may be employed to great advantage. Indeed it is impossible, in ordinary cases, for good vocal music to exist without the support of instruments. In every choir of singers, let their progress be ever so great, a judicious accompaniment seems to be indispensable to *complete* success. Such an accompaniment guides, sustains, strengthens, and relieves, the vocal parts. It promotes good tone and correct intonation, and renders vocal music pleasing and effective. But, great as are the advantages to be derived from in-

strumental accompaniment, how seldom are we able to realize them in church music ! The art of accompaniment seems to be as little understood and as much abused by instrumentalists, as is the art of singing by vocalists. Instead of accompanying the singing, instrumental performers often take the lead of it. Instead of playing in a soft and simple manner, and in unison with the voice, they will, for the sake of distinction, make as much noise as possible, raise their instruments an octave above the pitch, and introduce a multitude of shakes and flourishes and graces, falsely so called, which are wholly out of place, and are equally offensive to correct musical taste and religious propriety. With such a ridiculous attempt at accompaniment, in vain would even the choir of angels who announced the birth of the Saviour to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, swell the chorus of "Glory to God in the highest." When instruments are employed as an accompaniment, they should always be made subordinate to the vocal parts, with which they should combine in a harmonious and delicate manner. They should never predominate,* or be so prominent as to attract the attention of the audience, or draw off the mind from the subject of the poetry. Indeed, unless they can assist to enforce the sentiment of the words upon the heart, they are worse than useless. But this is what they are designed to do, and when properly used are *capable* of doing. How

* In some cases where the accompanist has to do with untutored voices, he is compelled to put forth some strength to control them ; and thus far he must transcend the limits which the art properly assigns to him.

different is the effect produced by them as they are frequently used in our churches !

The instruments usually employed in church music are either the organ, or violins, violincellos, clarinets, flutes, &c. There are, however, very serious objections to the use of the latter instruments. They require much time and attention to keep them in order and in tune ; and it frequently becomes necessary, or is thought to be so, to tune or repair them, while the congregation are assembling, much to the annoyance of those who desire to be left wholly to their own reflections, at such a season, to lift up their hearts to God in secret, or to fix their minds upon some serious subject as preparatory to the commencement of public worship ; and it is sometimes the case that we hear the keys snapping or the strings thrumming, in prayer or sermon time. The least objectionable and the most useful of these instruments, is the violincello.* But were they in the hands of such musicians as was the sweet psalmist of Israel, the existing objections to *any* of them would be done away.

The organ is certainly the most valuable instrument for accompanying church music. Its fixed intonation, its facilities for harmonic combinations, its lofty and solemn tones, its adaptation to the performance of soft and loud passages, and the circumstance of its always being in order and ready for use, give it a decided advantage over every other

* The violin, were it not so wretchedly abused, would be equally valuable. Of all instruments, this is allowed to be capable of the most varied expression. But at present it has too many irrelevant associations.

instrument. The organ also has the benefit of strong favorable associations; as it belongs almost exclusively to the church, and is seldom employed in any other than sacred music; whereas the violin is apt to transport us to the ball room or the theatre, the flute to the parlour, and the clarinet and bassoon to the field. When under the hand of a man who understands his art, and feels his subject, the organ possesses a charm that is irresistible, and, at the same time, subordinate to sentiment. It even renders enunciation more distinct, and the interest and expression of the subject more exalted and refined. It is a great mistake to suppose that an organ *must necessarily* destroy vocal expression; or that because there is an organ, there is therefore no need of *vocal* performance. The only proper use of the organ is to accompany and assist the choir. Its use may be somewhat different, however, in most of those societies where singing is carried on by the whole congregation; because, while there is here no vocal expression to destroy, there is much discord which it is well to drown. The organist in such a case is quite excusable if he permit the lofty tones of his noble instrument to prevail.* Instead of relaxing exertions, therefore, to improve vocal music where an organ has been introduced, this very circumstance should be a powerful stimulus to in-

* Dr. Burney says, that "the greatest blessing to lovers of music in a parish church, is to have an organ in it sufficiently powerful to render the voices of the clerk, and of those who join in his *out-cry*, wholly inaudible."—*His. Mus.* vol. 3. p. 60. And yet how shamefully deficient must be the high praises of Zion, even under *such* circumstances!

creased efforts on account of the great assistance which may be derived from the instrument.

But valuable as the organ is, how seldom do we find it well managed ! How seldom are we able to realize its usefulness ! They only who know its inestimable value when judiciously employed, and have felt its thrilling influence in psalmody, are sensible to what an extent its powers are prostituted and its use perverted.

The abuse of the organ may in almost all cases be traced to the character and qualifications of the organist. Mere *musical talent* will no more enable a man to *play* than *sing* church music appropriately ; and probably Handel, or Bach, two of the greatest performers upon the organ that ever lived, would have been as unfit to *accompany*, as Braham or Madam Catalani would be to *lead*, a choir of singers in public worship. Execution, or a mere ability to play expertly upon his instrument, is probably not more important to the organist, than studied elocution is to the preacher ; and yet this is the only qualification which is generally required. A mere trial of skill often determines the choice ; and the man who excels in executing the most difficult passages upon his instrument, is appointed to the office.

It would be strange indeed, if when mere human eloquence was required in a minister of the Gospel, the cause of the church should not suffer. It is no less certain that when an ability to play well upon his instrument is the *only* qualification looked for in

an organist, the cause of church music will suffer. A minister must, indeed, be able to speak acceptably in the pulpit ; and if he is eloquent, and at the same time possesses the other requisite qualifications, it is so much the better. So with the organist : he must be able to play in a plain and appropriate style, which it is not difficult to acquire ; and if he be a finished performer, it is all the better, provided he possesses the other more important qualifications.

What these qualifications are, must occur to the mind of every person who considers the important station the organist occupies in the public worship of God, and the influence he is capable of exerting, through the medium of his instrument, upon the feelings of the audience. He should be a pious man, or at least one who has a deep sense of the solemnity of public worship. He should be a man of quick sensibility, or he will neither enter into the spirit of the words sung, nor of the other exercises of the day. He must be a man of good judgment, or he will make the most fatal mistakes in accompanying such hymns as call forth, in different stanzas, emotions of a different character. He should understand the nature of his instrument and the object of its introduction into the church—as an accompaniment to the voices, subservient to vocal effect, or rather designed to promote it ; and while he acknowledges his *instrument* to be subordinate to *vocal music*, he should acknowledge *himself* to be subordinate to the *leader* of the choir, on whom the

responsibility of the whole performance depends.* Were such organists employed, there would be fewer complaints of loud and unmeaning playing ; of long, flourishing, and fanciful interludes, foreign to the subject and unfit for the church ; of difficulties between organists, and singers, and trustees, and committees ; and of a thousand other ills that church music now is heir to.

Yet, after all we have said in favor of the organ, it will hardly be expected, that, in the present state of the churches, it can be very generally introduced with success. Many congregations in the country feel scarcely able to support their minister, and some are nearly or quite destitute of preaching. Some which might purchase an organ, would not be able to procure a competent person to manage it ; and among those who were thus able, a good leader of the choir might not be found. It is necessary for a society to count the cost, in these matters, and to make a right estimate of probable consequences, before they conclude to furnish themselves with this instrument. The best things are often the most liable to abuse.

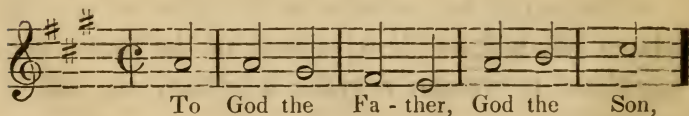
A few very brief remarks on the nature of musical adaptation, and on the character of the music best calculated to promote devotional feeling, may not be improper.

The subject of adapting music to words in

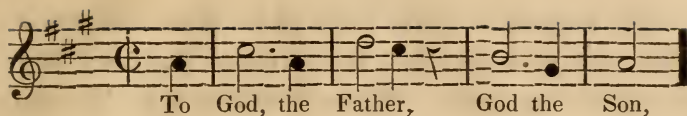
* This, however, must depend on circumstances. Where there is a good organist and an ignorant leader of the choir, the opposite rule must be adopted through necessity : but this, at best, is but a bad state of things.

metrical psalmody, seems to be in its infancy. The musician has done but very little by his compositions to enforce the sentiment of the poet—if we except some few cases of particular adaptation. On the one hand, the poet has written without reference to musical effect; and on the other, the musician has composed with very little attention to rhetorical effect. And it seems difficult to make much progress in this department while we are obliged to sing so many different hymns to the same tune. Time does not permit us to pursue this subject. The principle of adaptation, however, to which we now allude, and the difficulties attending it in the present state of church music, may be illustrated by one or two familiar examples. If we attend to the well known doxology of Dr. Watts, “To God the Father, God the Son,” &c. sung to the tune of Old Hundred, as it very commonly and appropriately is in the present state of musical improvement, we shall find that the particles *to* and *the*, are quite as conspicuous as the principal words of the line. The evil in this case is, that the very words, as sung, have a tendency to obscure the sentiment.

Example.



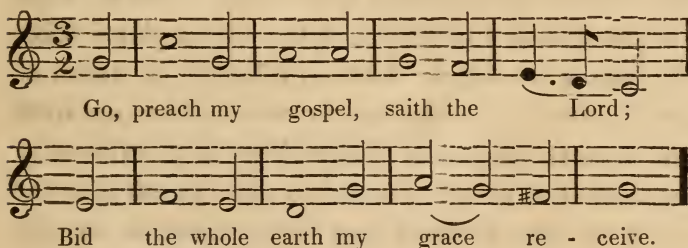
Now suppose we employ a different melody, a melody adapted to the comparative force of each word and syllable; the advantage will be apparent.



Again ; suppose we sing to the excellent old tune of Winchester the following lines.

“Go, preach my gospel, saith the Lord ;
 Bid the whole earth my grace receive :”—

we shall find that, from the prolonged notes and inappropriate melody, the significance of the words will be wholly lost.



Whereas, if we employ a melody written with reference to the sentiment, the music may be made to perform its entire office.



These examples are by no means striking ; but they are sufficiently so to give some idea of the importance of particular adaptation.

The subject of lyric poetry, in close connexion with that of adaptation, is one which has been very generally neglected. Music addresses itself more especially to the feelings ; but many of the hymns in common use are addressed almost exclusively to the understanding, and are argumentative, or didactic, or narrative, in their character. Such hymns, perhaps, are not quite as unfit for musical expression as a demonstration of Euclid, or Edwards on the Freedom of the Will, or Hume's History of England ; but it is not unfrequently the case, that, by an injudicious selection of this kind, the contemplated effect of singing is wholly lost. Probably one third, or even more, of the hymns in common use are unfit for musical purposes ; and perhaps in no other way can ministers of the Gospel do more to advance the cause of church music, than by an attention to this subject.*

Here it may not be improper to offer a few remarks on the selection of tunes. One of the most important characteristics of a good psalm tune is simplicity, or such an arrangement with respect both to melody and harmony, as shall render the design intelligible, and the execution easy. Solemnity is no less important.† But how often do we find tunes

* See on this subject the Christian Spectator for 1825.

† The rule laid down for church music in England, nearly a thousand years ago, was, "*Simplicem sanctamque melodiam, secundum morem ecclesiæ, sectentur.*" *Let them observe a simple and sacred melody, after the manner of the church.*—Spelman. Concil. Vol. 1. p. 248.

"In church music, curiosity and ostentation of art, wanton, or light, or unsuitable harmony, such as only pleaseth the ear, and doth not naturally serve to the very

the most complicated and difficult both as it regards melody and harmony, or florid and rapid movements, chosen in preference to simple and familiar airs. *Correct harmony* is undoubtedly important, and should by no means be disregarded. Objections to false harmony, however, will only be felt by the man of musical taste and knowledge. Nor would objections to a sermon, on account of its violations of taste or grammar, exist in the mind of the illiterate man. "But is it desirable that a sermon should be written, not only with grammatical accuracy, but with ease and elegance? so also it is of comparative importance, that the musical compositions of the church should be such as not to offend the most cultivated ear." Let there be a small number of simple, easy, and solemn, tunes selected for the use of the choir in public worship. New tunes may be occasionally introduced, but not until they are perfectly familiar, if possible, to the whole congregation;* at least, to the performers. A change should be constantly going on, but it should be so gradual as to be almost imperceptible. Where such a course is adopted, the business of the choir becomes com-

kind and degree of those impressions, which the matter that goeth with it, leaveth or is apt to leave in men's minds, doth rather blemish and disgrace that we do, than add either beauty or furtherance unto it. On the other side, these faults prevented, the force and efficacy of the thing itself, when it drowneth not utterly, but fitly suiteth with matter altogether sounding the praise of God, is in truth most admirable, and doth much edify, if not the understanding, because it teacheth not, yet surely the affection, because therein it worketh much. They must have hearts very dry and tough, from whom the melody of the psalms doth not some time draw that wherein a mind religiously affected delighteth."—*Hooker's Eccl. Polity, Book 5, § 38.*

* This, however, is supposing that a congregation are somewhat awake to the subject.

paratively easy, and the congregation can more intelligently attend to the singing.

The attitude, or position of the body, in which this duty is performed, is comparatively unimportant, though not entirely so. In prayer, rising from our seats is thought to be respectful and becoming; and as singing is an act of praise to God, rising in this exercise seems to be equally proper and important. "Under the former dispensation," says Dr. Collyer, "the Levites *stood up* to praise the Lord. I cannot think that we owe less reverence to the great object of our thanksgivings under this 'ministration of life,' than they felt under the 'ministration of death.' Singing is an *act of worship*; but sitting is not a *posture* of worship. In heaven *prostration* is used: surely on earth, less than *rising* cannot be deemed due reverence."

May I hope to be pardoned for saying that it is much to be regretted that no more attention is paid to music, as a part of religious worship, in the education of ministers of the Gospel. "We must of necessity maintain music in schools," says Luther: "a schoolmaster ought to have skill in music, otherwise I would not regard him; neither should we ordain young fellows to the office of preaching, except before, they have exercised and practised in the school of music."—"It is the duty of those who are preparing for the ministry," I now quote from the Christian Spectator, "to cultivate taste and skill in sacred music. The preacher who is unable

to sing, will often find this a deficiency that lessens his power of doing good. However, many have piety and talents adequate to preach the Gospel, who have not the capacity to acquire this art. We would not have them on this account turn aside from the holy work. But we would require of every candidate for the ministry, what a man even of very limited musical capacities certainly can do, that he attend sufficiently to the subject to know what style of music is suitable for public devotion, and what collections contain such music. With this knowledge alone he can do much in promoting good psalmody : he may, at least, avoid the misfortune and the shame of recommending and encouraging that which is bad. We sincerely regret, therefore, that there is not more interest on this subject in our theological seminaries.

“Every thing connected with the interests of the church is a proper subject of attention and study at a seminary for educating the guardians of the church. If it be important that the praying and the preaching in public worship be performed suitably, it is also important that the singing should be performed suitably. And if ministers will not watch over this part of the service, who will ? But proper attention will not be given to the subject in our theological institutions, until they are furnished with professors of music. Let this be done and we shall witness a new era in the sacred music of our country.”

May we not confidently indulge the hope, that the church is about to awake to this subject ; and

that while so much is doing in the world to advance the cause of science and religion, the songs of Zion will lie no longer neglected ?

“ Methinks,” says Baxter in his *Dying Thoughts*, “ when we are singing the praises of God in great assemblies, with joyful and fervent spirits, I have the liveliest foretaste of heaven, upon earth ; and I could almost wish that our voices were loud enough to reach through all the world, and to heaven itself. Nothing comforts me more in my greatest sufferings, nor seems more fit for me, while I wait for death, than singing psalms of praise to God : nor is there any exercise in which I had rather end my life.”

